

VA retirees leave with 75 years experience

by Melissa Withrow, Air Vehicles Directorate

WRIGHT-PATTERSON AIR FORCE BASE, Ohio — Dr. Alan Burkhard and George Holderby, from the Air Force Research Laboratory's Air Vehicles Directorate recently retired with over 75 years of experience between them.

Both men received the Outstanding Civilian Career Service Award for spending their entire careers dedicated to the Air Force and the technology needs of the warfighter.

On Oct. 2, Burkhard retired after 32 years with the Air Force. He concurrently held the positions of technical advisor in the Control Sciences Division and program manager for the Joint Strike Fighter Subsystem Integration Technology (J/IST) Demonstration Program.

Burkhard has been at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base since 1971, when he graduated from the University of Wisconsin with a doctorate in engineering mechanics and a minor in metallurgy. During his career, he conceived, developed, and transitioned aircraft vehicle subsystem technology to front line Air Force and Navy weapon systems. The technology he developed and matured is incorporated into most current military aircraft. His expertise has had an impact in the design of emerging, front-line weapon systems such as the Joint Strike Fighter, a fighter designed to have affordable variants that meet the individual requirements of each the U.S. Air Force, Navy and Marine Corps, and the United Kingdom's Royal Navy and Royal Air Force. Burkhard was with the J/IST Demonstration Program since its inception as the chief engineer before becoming the program's manager in 1997.

"The Air Force has given me the opportunity to work on lots of different projects," Burkhard said. "You are basically only limited by what you want to do."

"It is a place where there's opportunity for diversity of projects. You are not locked into just working on one type of problem," he continued.

Holderby was honored with a retirement ceremony on Oct. 3, marking 43 years of continuous service with the Air Force. He had been at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base since graduating from the University of Michigan in 1960, with his bachelor's degree in aeronautical engineering. His retirement ceremony on October 3, 2003, marked 43 years of continuous outstanding service with the Air Force.

Most recently, Holderby was facilities manager in VA's Structures Division, where he directed and managed modernization, remediation, and other improvements to the divisions testing facilities. Throughout his career, he was involved in the research, exploratory development, evaluation, and advanced development of aerospace technology. Holderby began his career planning and conducting full-scale structural test programs for the F-104 Starfighter, F-105 Thunderchief, and the F-106 Delta Dart. These revolutionary aircraft achieved altitudes and speeds previously unattainable. The world speed record for a single engine aircraft set by the F-106 still stands today.

In addition, he worked on the Strategic Defense Initiative, where he investigated the probable Soviet response to the deployment of the space-based laser. He also designed ways to structurally test aircraft canopy transparencies to determine their resistance to bird-strikes.

Holderby will miss working with the "top-notch" people in the Air Force as well as testing cutting-edge technology. He said he plans to "golf, fish, and be with my grandchildren." In addition, he will now be able spend more time with his wife of 43 years, his 2 children, and 3 grandchildren who have been "very supportive" of his career. @